

THE beestes passen by the erthes by ful diverse figures. for som of hem han hir bodies straught and crepen in the dust, and drawn after hem a tras or a foruh ycontinued; that is to seyn, as nadres or snakes. And other beestes, by the wandring lightnesse of hir wings, beten the windes, and over-swimmen the spaces of the longe eyr by moist fleeinge. And other beestes glad/en himself to diggen hir tras or hir stepes in the erthe with hir goings or with hir feet, & to goon either by the grene felde, or elles to walken under the wodes. And albeit so that thou seest that they alle discorden by diverse formes, algates hir faces, enclined, hevieth hir dulle wittes. Only the linage of man heveth heyeste his heyehved, and stondest light with his upright body, and biholdeth the erthes under him. And, but yif thou, erthely man, wexest yvel out of thy wit, this figure amonesteth thee, that axest the hevne with thy righte visage, and hast areysed thy forehved, to beren up abeigh thy corage; so that thy thoght ne benat yhevied ne put lowe under fote, sin that thy body is so heye areysed.

THEREFOR thanne, as I have shewed a litel herbiform, that althing that is ywist nis nat known by his nature propre, but by the nature of hem that comprehend it, lat us loke now, in as moche as it is leveful to us, as who seith, lat us loke now as we mowen, which that the estat is of the devyne substaunce; so that we mowen eek known what his science is. The commune jugement of alle creatures resonables thanne is this: that God is eterne. Lat us considere thanne what is eternitee; for certes that shal shewen us togidere the devyne nature and the devyne science.

ETERNITEE, thanne, is parfit possession & altogidere of lyf interminable; and that sheweth more cleerly by the comparisoun or the collacioun of temporel thinges. for al thing that liveth in tyme it is present, and procedeth fro preterits into futures, that is to seyn, fro tyme passed into tyme cominge; ne ther nis nothing establisshed in tyme that may embracen togider al the space of his lyf. for certes, yit ne hath it

taken the tyme of tomorwe, and it hath lost the tyme of yisterday. And certes, in right as in the moevable & transitorie moment. Thanne thilke thing that suffreth temporel condicioun, althogh that it suffreth bigan to be, ne thogh it never cese for to be, as Aristotle demed of the world, and althogh that the lyf of it be stretched with infinite of tyme, yit algates nis it no swich thing that men mighten trowen by right that it is eterne. for althogh that it comprehend and embrace the space of lyf infinite, yit algates ne embraceth it nat the space of the lyf altogider; for it ne hath nat the futures that ne ben nat yit, ne it ne hath no longer the preterits that ben ydoon or ypassed. But thilke thing thanne, that hath & comprehendeth togider al the plentee of the lyf interminable, to whom therne faileth naught of the future, and to whom therne is naught of the preterit escaped nor yprooved by right to be eterne. And it bihoveth by necessitee that thilke thing be alwey present to himself, and competent; as who seith, alwey present to himself, & somighty that al be right at his plesance; & that he have al present the infinite of the moevable tyme. Wherefor som men trowen wrongfully that, when they heren that it semede to Plato that this world ne hadde never biginninge of tyme, ne that it never shal han failinge, they wenen in this maner that this world be makid coetene with his maker; as who seith, they wene that this world and God ben makid togider eterne, and that is a wrongful weninge. for other thing is it to ben ylad by lyf interminable, as Plato graunted to the world, and other thing is it to embrace togider al the present of the lyf interminable, the whiche thing it is cleer and manifest that it is propre to the devyne thoght.

NE it ne sholde nat semen to us, that God is elder thanne thinges that ben ymakid by quantitee of tyme, but rather by the propretee of his simple nature. for this ilke infinit moevinge of temporel thinges folweth this presentarie estat of lyf unmoevable; and so as it ne may nat countrefeten it ne feynen it ne be evenlyke to it for the immoevabletee, that is to seyn, that is in the eternitee of God, it faileth and falleth into moevinge fro the simplicitee of the presence of God, and disencreseth into the infinit quantitee of future and of preterit: and so as it ne may nat han togider al the plentee of the lyf, algates yit, for as moche as it ne ceseth never for to ben in som maner, it semeth somdel to us, that it folweth & resembleth thilke thing that it ne may nat atayne to ne fulfillen, and bindeth itself to som maner pre-

sence of this litel and swifte moment: the whiche presence of this litel & swifte moment, for that it bereth a maner image or ymagesse of the aydwellinge presence of God, it graunteth, to swiche maner thinges as it bitydeth to, that it semeth hem as thise thinges han yben, and ben.

AND, for that the presence of swich litel moment ne may nat dwelle, therfor it ravished and took the infinit wey of tyme, that is to seyn, by successioun; and by this maner is it ydoon, for that it sholde continue the lyf in goinge, of the whiche lyf it ne mighte nat embrace the plentee in dwellinge. And forthy, yif we wollen putten worthy names to thinges, and folwen Plato, lat us seye thanne soothly, that God is eterne, & the world is perpetuel. Thanne, sin that every jugement knoweth and comprehendeth by his owne nature thinges that ben subject unto him, ther is soothly to God, alweys, an eterne and presentarie estat; and the science of him, that over/passeth al temporel moevement, dwelleth in the simplicitee of his presence, and embraceth and considereth alle the infinit spaces of tymes, preterits and futures, and loketh, in his simple knowinge, alle thinges of preterit right as they weren ydoon presently right now. Yif thou wolt thanne thenken & avyse the prescience, by which it knoweth alle thinges, thou ne shal nat demen it as prescience of thinges to comen, but thou shalt demen it more rightfully that it is science of presence or of instaunce, that never ne faileth. for which it is nat ycleped Previdene, but it sholde rather ben cleped Purviaunce, that is establisshed ful fro right lowe thinges, & biholdeth from afer alle thinges, right as it were fro the heye heighte of thinges. Why axestow thanne, or why disputestow thanne, that thilke thinges ben doon by necessitee whiche that ben yaeyn and known by the devyne sighte, sin that, forsothe, men ne maken nat thilke thinges necessarie which that they seen ben ydoon in hir sighte? for addeth thy biholdinge any necessitee to thilke thinges that thou biholdest presente? Nay, quod I.

CERTES, thanne, if men mighte maken any digne comparisoun or collacioun of the presence devyne and of the presence of mankinde, right so as ye seen some thinges in this temporel present, right so seeth God alle thinges by his eterne present. Wherefore this devyne prescience ne chaungeth nat the nature ne the propretee of thinges, but biholdeth swiche thinges present to himward as they shullen bityde to yowward in tyme to comen. Ne it confoundeth nat

the jugement of thinges; but by o sighte of his thought, he knoweth the thinges to comen, as wel necessarie as nat necessarie. Right so as whan ye seen togider a man walken on the erthe and the sonne aysen in the hevne, albeit so that ye seen and biholden that oon and that other togider, yit natheles ye demen and discernen that that oon is voluntarie and that other necessarie. Right so thanne the devyne lookinge, biholdinge alle thinges under him, ne troubleth nat the qualitee of thinges that ben certainly present to himward; but, as to the condicioun of tyme, forsothe, they ben future, for which it folweth, that this nis noon opinioun, but rather a stedefast knowinge, ystrengthened by soothnesse, that, whanne that God knoweth any thing to be, he ne unwot nat that thilke thing wanteth necessitee to be; this is to seyn, that, whan that God knoweth any thing to bityde, he wot wel that it ne hath no necessitee to bityde.

AND yif thou seyst heer, that thilke thing that God seeth to bityde, it ne may nat unbityde (as who seith, it mot bityde), and thilke thing that ne may nat unbityde it mot bityde by necessitee, and that thou streyne me by this name of necessitee: certes, I wol wel confessen and biknowe a thing of ful sad trouthe, but unnethe shal ther any wight mowe seen it or come therto, but yif that he be biholder of the devyne thought, for I wol answeren thee thus: that thilke thing that is future, whan it is referred to the devyne knowinge, thanne is it necessarie; but certes, whan it is understonden in his owne kinde, men seen it is outrely free, & absolut fro alle necessitee.

FOR certes, ther ben two maneres of necessitee. That oon necessitee is simple, as thus: that it bihoveth by necessitee, that alle men be mortal or deedly. Another necessitee is conditionel, as thus: yif thou wost that a man walketh, it bihoveth by necessitee that he walke. Thilke thing thanne that any wight hath yknowe to be, it ne may ben non other weyes thanne he knoweth it to be. But this condicioun ne draweth nat with hir thilke necessitee simple. for certes, this necessitee conditionel, the propre nature of it ne maketh it nat, but the adjeccioun of the condicioun maketh it. for no necessitee ne constreyneth a man to gon, that goth by his propre wil; albeit so that, whan he goth, that it is necessarie that he goth. Right on this same maner thanne, yif that the purviaunce of God seeth any thing present, than mot thilke thing ben by necessitee, althogh that it ne have no necessitee of his owne nature. But certes, the futures that bityden by freedom of